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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS, U.S. DEFENSE STRATEGY

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage September 6-8 on the Ma Ying-jeou Administration's various moves to stimulate Taiwan's sluggish economy, following extensive and severe criticisms against President Ma's failure to realize his economic platform in his first 100 days in office; on the continued probe into former President Chen Shui-bian's money laundering case; and on an announcement by China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Sunday to expand exchanges across the Taiwan Strait.

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" said President Ma's cross-Strait policy, which allegedly favors China, has made Ma a troublemaker to the United States, as evidenced by the United States's alleged refusal to sell Taiwan F-16C/D fighter jets. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" also criticized Ma's arbitrary definition of cross-Strait relations as "a special non-state-to-state relationship," saying that the move has downgraded Taiwan's sovereignty. An editorial in the conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post," on the other hand, hailed U.S. President George W. Bush's change in his defense strategy by placing the "long war" against extremism above conventional challenges from China and Russia. End summary.

13. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

A) "[Taiwan's] Three Major Bargaining Chips Have Suffered Severe Erosion"

Former DPP Legislator Lin Cho-shui opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 300,000] (9/7):

"Judging from the United States' decision to turn down the F-16 C/D fighter jets deal [to Taiwan], [it appears that] President Ma Ying-jeou has got himself in rather big diplomatic trouble with the United States.

"China must be very happy that Ma has ruined Taiwan's relations with the United States, but what Beijing offered Ma was not rewards. During the former Chen Shui-bian Administration, it was normally Beijing that took the initiative to talk about the three-link issue [with Taiwan]. Now, with the second round of negotiations between the Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait looming, Taiwan was eager to propose issues [to Beijing], but Beijing has been lukewarm in response in terms of what issues need to be discussed or even whether there are issues that really need to be discussed. What's even worse is that Beijing has turned around and blamed Ma for being too rude by demanding immediately after he was elected that Beijing honor his two [campaign] checks about launching direct chartered flights on July 4 and allowing Mainland tourists to [come to] Taiwan. It appears that [China] is about to follow the lead of the United States in treating Ma as a troublemaker.

"... When it comes to foreign relations, China is an old hand at manipulating power politics. China is clearly aware that for Taiwan

to be able to stand up in front of Beijing, the island must in principle possess three major bargaining chips: First, the United States must treat Taiwan as a friend; second, there must be an internal pro-independence force in Taiwan that is strongly opposed to unification [with China]; and third, Taiwan's [must possess its] own economic strength. These three major bargaining chips have all undergone severe erosion since President Ma assumed office. First, Ma's ambiguous concept of sovereignty and his position of 'putting cross-Straight [relations] ahead of [the island's] foreign relations' as well as the strategies derived from such a position have resulted in Washington's reduced support for Taiwan; [the United States'] refusal to sell F16C/D fighter jets to Taiwan is in itself a very strong indicator [of lowered U.S. support]. Second, even though public opinion in Taiwan supporting Taiwan independence is still mounting, the DPP, a leader of the pro-Taiwan independence power, has already stepped down following a severe [electoral] defeat. High-ranking KMT officials, on the other hand, have been striving and rushing to visit Beijing in order to fawn on China. Finally, the Ma Administration has totally given up on Taiwan's economic development based on its own initiative, and all it wants is to rely completely on China.

"Given that [Taiwan's] three major bargaining chips have been severely eroded Beijing certainly believes now is the best time for it to further compress Taiwan's road for survival in the international community. Surely it does not have to behave politely toward Taiwan any more. ... If the Ma Administration continues not to adjust its cross-Straight and diplomatic strategies that invite insult, then Taiwan will only sink deeper in its predicament."

B) "Ma's Confusion is Taiwan's Disaster"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: STRATEGY

20,000] editorialized (9/8):

"... Ma's arbitrary redefinition of 'special state-to-state relations' into 'region to region' relations is by no means harmless. His definition of Taiwan as a 'region' undermines our claim to full, equal and distinct representation in the international community as a democratic independent state and negates the right of democratic self-determination of our 23 million people under the principle of 'people's sovereignty' embraced by Lee and underlining the DPP's May 1999 'Resolution on the Future of Taiwan.'

"Ma's redefinition also opens questions about his own status, namely whether he considers himself to be the constitutionally mandated head of state of the state composed of Taiwan's 23 million citizens, the 'chief executive' of a 'region' or, megalomaniacally, the sole legitimate 'president' of a 'great ROC' including over 1.3 billion people in the PRC, Mongolia and Taiwan. ... We call on Ma either to retract his statement, submit his definition that Taiwan is merely a 'region' for approval or rejection by our 23 million citizens through national referendum or resign his post for having won election through fraud."

14. U.S. Defense Strategy

"A Change in U.S. Defense Strategy"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/8):

"President George W. Bush is making, belatedly, a change in U.S. defense strategy. He has to step down early next year and nobody knows his successor in the White House may change that change again. But Bush's change makes sense. The United States now places the 'long war' against extremism above potential conventional challenges from China and Russia as the top priority of the military in the coming years. It's the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that made the Pentagon to change the strategy despite a steady and huge defense buildup in China and an invasion by Russia of its former Soviet republic of Georgia during the Summer Olympics in Beijing. ...

"It seems that Washington has finally come to accept the plain truth that neither Russia nor China is a real potential enemy. The Pax

Americana makes the United States the world's policeman. It has to see to it that it has more and better asymmetrical military capabilities to wage the long war against violent extremist movements."

YOUNG